1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

There are many greetings which are adjusted to social rank, so that one can say "Hello" to a social inferior, to an equal, or to a respected superior, and receive a proper reply recognizing the same distinction. People from other areas of Nigeria and Europeans claim it is a difficult language to learn. But this is probably due to the fact that the most widespread language of Northern Nigeria is Hausa, and many outsiders find they can get along with Hausa in the cities and larger towns without having to make the effort to learn Kanuri. Certainly today most Kanuri school children know some Hausa, and facility with it is spreading throughout all of Northern Nigeria.

Distinctive Kanuri cultural features, things which are of unique Kanuri origin, are not necessarily vitally important things. But they are, if you like, diagnostic features that indicate Bornu-ness in contrast to the cultures of other closely related ethnic groups in the Sudan. Perhaps the most striking feature is the women's hair style. At its most resplendent, it resembles the form of a Trojan helmet made out of an enormous braided ponytail that begins as a crest at the front-center of the head and curves up over the head to end in a slight upward curl of the tail at the back. Today a few of the young school girls are beginning to give up this traditional Kanuri coiffure and are taking on instead the Shuwa-Arab style of a smooth top of the head with hundreds of small braids clinging tightly to the sides and back of the head, at the ends of which are either loose ringlets or a pageboy effect.

Other features which are unique to Bornu are their knives and calabash carvings. These items are also unique to each ethnic group in the region, as are tribal marks cut on the face. Thus many unique features of Kanuri traditional life are thought of locally by many peoples as differentiating criteria for separating one ethnic group from another. A Northern Nigerian going to a market in Jos, or Maiduguri, or Kano, can spot a Kanuri, Fulani, or a Hausa calabash design at a glance just as he can tell another person's ethnic group by his tribal marks, or spot a Bornu knife among a pile of others.

On the other hand, the inside of a Kanuri gentleman's household is not significantly different from the household of a man of similar rank, wealth, occupation, and education, who lives in Hausa country seven or eight hundred miles to the west of Bornu. They dress in a very similar manner, eat very similar food, and share many of the same beliefs and attitudes about what is the best way to live, make decisions, treat one's family, friends, superiors, and worship one's God. Thus although there are some clear-cut diagnostic features representative of Kanuri culture, the people share in a way of life that is practiced by millions in the Sudan, or southern savannah land border of the Sahara desert.

Gathering the Material

I first arrived in Bornu in January 1956 and stayed there until August 1957. My next contacts occurred in the summers of 1964 and again in 1965, and hopefully I shall return in the future to study specialized topics to deepen my understanding of this society as it changes and progresses in the modern world. During our first visit my wife and I spent most of our time in the small village of Magumeri about thirty-three miles northwest of the capital. This was our home base. From here we also visited other parts of the emirate, especially the larger village of

GEIDAM

789 301 [531] Another area of religious behavior concerns the wearing of charms (laya). These are, typically, verses of the Koran, bound in decorated leather cases, strung on a thong, and worn on one's neck. They are written by a Malam, and are obtained for specific purposes: to protect the wearer against a variety of catastrophic events of natural origin (lightning, snake-bite, drowning), against injury from humans (knife wounds, gun shot), against gossip and evil eye, and to insure success and popularity. Some individuals wear great clusters of twenty or more different laya about their necks; others wear only one or two. It can be seen in Table XXV that all but two people in the sample own one or more laya. Though most people in the sample wear one or more laya constantly (columns 1 and 2), a number of individuals wear laya only in times of emergency--when they are [484] in dangerous surroundings. Dangers arise whenever one leaves one's own village or town, and they are greatest when one is traveling. Fourteen individuals state that they only wear laya 789 when they are traveling. The only group showing any differ- 301 ences in Table XXV are the Canteen Operators. Most of them 441 wear laya only when traveling. It is difficult to discern the significance of this aspect of their behavior but taken together with their strictness in other areas of religious behavior (fasting, drinking beer) it would seem to indcate that they place less reliance on the protection afforded by wearing Koranic charms 441 than do other groups. They nevertheless strictly observe the 78 standards of religious behavior in areas which can be seen by

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